

by Hardra6

Trust

"Trust "

I

Poor, fragile children.

A child is every bit as good as an adult. They think larger than life. They can imagine. But they can also realize. Put two and two

together. And they can give a very strong mental fight.

My name is Kaisc-four-seven-nine. Sub-Visser Twenty. I am a Yeerk. Our infestation of the Human minds was going slowly. Very, very slowly. But then I was moved to this planet, on assignment. It seems that the head of 'The Sharing' Has been re-located. Failure to attend to the Andalites, they presume. So I came, and I learned.

I took a Human Child's body. They called me a fool, but no, they are the fools. There were Andalites on this planet. And, behind the mighty Visser's back, I've heard that after several months he still fails to destroy them.

"If you ask me I think another Visser Three should be appointed," I smirked darkly, watching the very Yeerk stride by on Andalite legs. "It seems that the Arrogance of the Andalite has worn off on him."

"Perhaps They should force him to give up his body, too," Another Sub-Visser chuckled.

And so went my first two weeks on Earth. It was so easy to fit into the schools. Convince the students to join my new organization.

But then, in the distant background, there was the quiet, plotting mind of the girl I now lived inside. Her name was Tia.

I entered the McDonalds. "One happy meal, with extra happy," I said somewhat tiredly. The controller working there smiled nervously and nodded.

I went around to where the freezer was. I did not need to drain into the Yeerk pool, not this time, but I wanted to stock up on Kandrona rays, so not as to waste my time tomorrow. Besides, I had to update some reports to the Pool ship in orbit. They were already late, as it was.

I faced the Door to the pool, Then began to punch in the new security number on the control. Five, six, five, six, Seven, Zero-

[DON'TMESSUP!] Someone screamed.

Six!?!? No! Three! My hand jerked and I punched the wrong number! The alarms rang in my ears. I shut my eyes before the biofilter went off. Eventually, I heard someone say, "Sub-Visser, what is the problem?"

I opened Tia's eyes. "Nothing is the problem. I punched the wrong number, comrade."

[Keep plotting, Tia,] I laughed.

[Don't worry. I will.]

II

Jake

Flashlight, Check.

Credit card, check.

Okay. I was ready to break into The Art Museum.

Top security. Tons of Guards. Controller Guards. And all I needed was a Flashlight, and a credit card.

"Let's do it!"

"This is insane."

[I am ready, Prince Jake.]

"Can we do this any slower?"

[I hate morphing roach...]

"The roach is a wonderful creature...it's easy to admire if you forget how ugly it looks..."

We all made our routine statements.

Then the Six of us started to Morph.

Woah! You say. Hold on there!

My name is Jake. I would tell you my last name, save the fact that if I did, I would be dead or captured within ten minutes. A Yeerk has controlled my Brother. Someone would tell him. My house would be swarming with Yeerks, hiding inside human brains. Our resistance would be over.

They think we're all Andalites. We're just four kids. One Kid who stayed in a morph too long. And one Andalite youth.

And we've been saving the Earth's Butt for quite a long time now.

Morph? Wha-huh? You wonder.

It's an Andalite technology. It allows the creature to change into anything it can touch. Anything it can 'acquire.' A fly. A tiger. Even an alien, if we can collect its DNA.

That's how we do it.

"Are we going or not?" Whined Rachel. She's my cousin, And the most impatient and ruthless fighter in the world.

I started to shrink. I felt no pain-and I'm glad, because if I did I'm sure I would be shrieking and screaming in pain.

My legs reversed their direction. Talons sheathed out of my toes, which were becoming longer and more powerful. A ripping, hooked beak formed from my nose and my lips, and a feather pattern across my skin came to life and fluffed into fine brown feathers. Before I knew It, I was a falcon. The morph was complete.

I looked around with laser-precision eyes and saw the others

finishing up their morphs. Rachel, a bald eagle. The biggest of us all. Cassie, my, well, girlfriend, was morphed as an Osprey, as was my best friend Marco. Tobais, Up above, was in his natural form of Red-tailed Hawk, (well, NEW natural form) ready to take off, and Finally, Ax, our very own Andalite, was beside me as a Northern Harrier.

[Let's go, then.] I said. We took off.

Our mission: Get into the Yeerk pool via History Museum. Let Ax access security system and wreck it. Small morphs open Host cages. Large morphs defend. We had a plan. And all we needed was that Card and that Flashlight.

[Man, this thing is heavy,] Complained Rachel. She had the largest Bird morph and was the only one capable of carrying the flashlight. And it wasn't that heavy, either.

[There's the Museum,] Tobais reported from above. We fell into a soft dive and landed nicely on the roof.

[Okay. Down the Air vent.] I Said, Hopping up onto the rim of the partially-opened vent. It was partially open thanks to the cleaning guy, who Tobais noticed forgot to place it on securely.

[From here on in, Absolute silence.] Marco demanded us.

[What are you, an army general?] Rachel snorted, standing next to me and flipping the flashlight on.

[Actually, that's from Mission: Impossible,] He sneered.

I began to de-morph. In order to access the air vent, I'd have to have hands. Time seemed to slip away and I was human in no time. I climbed into the vent, then grabbed the flashlight from Rachel.

I waited, and soon behind me came Cassie. We moved on ahead and were followed by Ax and Tobais in Human Morph, then Marco and Rachel in the rear as back-guards.

"Where was the entrance again?" I asked Marco.

"Between the Mummies and the Old Pots." He Murmured from the back.

"What is a Mummie? Ummie, eeeeeeee?"

"Ax, Shhh," Cassie whispered.

It was actually very easy to find the entrance. Two guards carrying strange weapons stood nearby what looked to be a plain wall. Ax identified it as a hologram.

Quietly we backtracked and lifted the vent out of its place nearby. After a quick morph to cockroach, I leapt down to the floor twenty five feet below and scurried out of the way into a notch in the wall and began to de-morph. I watched as three other cockroaches fell.

[Prince Jake,] I heard Ax's calm thought speech from above, [I have

no way of getting down. If I de-morph I will be too large.]

"Oh man!" I whispered. "Okay. Rachel, Cassie, Marco, You guys help me catch Tobais. Tobais?" I called as quietly as possible, "De-morph and let yourself fall. We'll catch you."

[I sure hope so, man.] Soon enough, a bird could be seen looking down at the four of us.

"Don't flap," I added quietly.

[Coming.] Tobais jumped. Cassie caught him. [Woah.] He murmured.

"Morph human." I ordered.

"What about Ax?" Rachel asked.

"We're going to catch him, too."

"WHAT?"

"SHHHH!" I made sure that the guards hadn't heard. Then: "Ax, don't morph. Just jump down, we'll catch you, too."

[Prince Jake, I feel that the five of you will not manage to support my Human body weight, especially with the increased momentum of falling from this height.]

"Just trust us!"

[I will trust you, Prince Jake.]

First, his legs slid out, and then he lowered himself until he was holding on with just his fingers. [One, two...Three!]

And about A hundred thirty pounds of kid came tumbling down on top of us.

III

Jake

"OOF!" We all exclaimed. The six of us all fell to the floor.

"Ah, thank you for catching me before I slammed this body into the floor." Ax smiled.

"Sure, thank us!" Marco groaned, "Thank YOU for giving me a displaced spinal disk!"

"WHO'S THERE?" A voice boomed. Everyone looked at me. I motioned and we melted into the shadows behind mummies or whatever.

"Ax, de-morph!" I said in the quietest yell I have ever managed. Two guards walked our way.

I just hoped that Ax could de-morph fast.

Apparently, he didn't need to. Just as the Guard was in a position to

see me, he muttered 'uhn' and fell over forwards. Ax, Half-demorphed and becoming more and more Andalite by the second stood in his place.

[Come on!] He urged. [We have little time before they figure out what's going on!]

I sprang to my feet. So did the others. "Tobais, de-morph quick. Everyone else morph cockroach."

I walked over to where the secret entrance was. I stuck my hand through. It disappeared into the brown painted wall. I stuck my head in; hoping it wasn't filled with Hork-Bajir warriors.

It wasn't. It was a small room, with white features and a bluish background. I walked back out into the hall, picked up the five Cockroaches from the floor and entered the small room again. As I'd been told, There was A nine-number security code with a keycard slot. After Ax had examined my used up border's gift card, he nodded and said that if I slid it through the card slot, the system would malfunction and the Gleet Biofilter would turn off for a moment. But I would have only that long to get the others in and morph cockroach.

I approached the door, and Had already begun the morph. With a quick powerful swipe, I sliced the Border's card through the slot and started morphing like crazy.

The computer snapped and fuzzed with electricity, then totally died. The light above the door blinked and it opened automatically.

I still had a human head when I motored my roach legs through the door. And I wasn't exactly a termite. I was about a foot long, and shrinking. And getting tired from all this morphing.

But we managed to get inside.

We waited on the main floor, after dashing down the ramp so we wouldn't be discovered, and hid behind a trash can while we caught our breaths. [Good work,] Cassie said, [That was fast morphing.]

[Thanks,] I murmured, embarrassed. I find myself embarrassed a lot when I'm around Cassie.

After we were rested, We split up. Cassie and Tobais for the rescue. Marco and Ax for the sabotage. Rachel and I for protection.

"Let's do it," Rachel suggested.

Our little Roach bodies scurried over to the fringes of the cave, where every ten feet there were giant Holes in the cave walls caused by natural erosion. We each took a hole, except for Cassie and Tobais, and started demorphing.

When I was done de-morphing, when I had normal, non-roach legs and normal teeth, I realized that the hole I was in wasn't as giant as I had thought it was. But that was okay. I started on one of the most powerful morphs I had: the tiger.

The first thing that I felt happen was the long, black and orange striped tail That curled down around my legs. My ears slid up to the top of my head, while I felt the itchy feeling of sharp teeth filling up my mouth. I fell onto four tough paws and felt a nice sleek coat shimmer across my body.

And then the mind. The tiger's cool, I-rule-all mind seemed to seep into my head. And a lot of the fear slipped away.

[Prince Jake, Marco is morphed as a gorilla. We are ready to enter the computer vault as soon as your diversion is set up.]

[Right. Cassie? Tobais?] I looked around.

[You're stepping right over us,] Tobais snipped; [We're getting onto your leg. Okay, we're ready!]

[Rachel?]

[LET'S KICK BUTT!] She Growled. We watched as Ax and Marco slipped away and Rachel and I followed the shadows basically right up to the Host cages. [Hork-Bajir first,] I told Cassie and Tobais, [They might be able to help us.] I watched as the two cockroaches slipped off my leg and snuck up to the rows of cages lining the Yeerk pool.

[Okaaaay,] I watched carefully until my friends were near the locks on the cages. [NOW!]

Rachel and I Jumped from the shadows and Dashed about twenty feet from the cages. It took the Yeerks a little thinking before they recognized That a tiger and a bear were standing next to their pool, so we reminded them.

ROOOOOOAAARRRRRR!!

OOOOOOORRRRREEEEE!! Rachel's muddier call was at least as loud as mine. I roared again.

ROOOOOOAAAAARRRRRRRRR!

[Let's do it!]

We kicked into action. A Hork-Bajir controller jumped in front of me. With a swipe he was thrown back ten feet into more oncoming enemy.

Soon the air was filled with lasers. I felt a sting in my back leg and turned to face who ever had shot me-but there was only a Hork-Bajir there, flying at my back.

In a second I whirled around and instead of landing on me, he hit the ground and couldn't get back up. Broken bones, I guessed.

Out of the corner of my eye, I saw the first Hork-Bajir cage door fly open. Although I couldn't see them, I knew that two Animorphs were off to open another cage.

[Ax! Marco!] I called out.

[We are fine, are we needed for assistance?] Ax responded. So we were in range.

[No, we're okay. How about you?]

[Oh, there were several codes to get by,] Ax said in a conversational tone, [several Yeerks entered, and they have since then lost consciousness.]

[What about the info?] I slashed at a human controller.

[There is the most annoying blank space. A lot of information seems to have been downloaded and deleted recently, today or yesterday. I suggest that perhaps someone else has sabotaged this Yeerk pool. I have no contribution as to who might have done so, however.]

RRROOOOAARRRRR! I growled again, just for the thrill of it. Rachel echoed my call, and a group of freed Hork-Bajir Began fighting their way towards us. Good. [Keep looking,] I instructed, taking out a Taxxon with a snap of my jaws, [And when you're done---]

But I was interrupted. The sound came from everywhere. And it was loud, not unlike thought-speech. I suspected Visser Three, but the tone and voice were not his. All action ceased, and the confused controllers looked all around for whatever it was speaking.

And the weirdest thing of all was that it wasn't in English. It was a total Alien language, that wasn't anything that A Hork-Bajir could possibly say, or a Taxxon. I know that Andalites have a sort of implant that translates things for them, but we didn't. And I could understand it perfectly.

YEERKS! CEASE THIS INSTANTANIOUSLY! RETURN TO YOUR HOMEWORLD AND FREE THIS ONE-OR PREPARE TO BE EXTERMINATED!

IV

Jake

[Ax! Tell me that's Andalite!] I heard Marco yelp.

[Forgive me, Marco, it is not Andalite and I don't know what it is.] Ax said.

[Get out here!] I ordered. I looked around, and soon An Andalite and A gorilla busted out of a door to one of the many buildings around the pool. They spotted us and dashed our way.

Controllers around us were still staring blandly, and the killing had stopped. Good, we needed a breather.

[I'm going to see if I can communicate with it!] I said to the others.

[We can't even see it!] Cassie pointed out.

[I'll just try,] I mumbled, [Cassie, Tobias, Power morphs.]

The voice came again. THIS IS YOUR SECOND WARNING. STOP ALL INFESTING



ACTION IMMEDIATELY AND BEGIN TO SHIP OFF THIS PLANET!

[Hello?] I said in thought speech immediately. [We're in this Pool as well! We're resisting the Yeerks! Do you copy?] It may have been somewhat desperate, but these people seemed determined and might kill us, too, accidentally.

YOU'RE in THE POOL? The voice said, less forceful than before. And I got the feeling that it was private thought-speech (or whatever it was!) DON'T GO IN THERE, YOU'LL BE INFESTED!

[We know,] I said, [We're in the Yeerk pool. In the cavern. We assumed that you were in orbit.]

NO. The voice paused. I could decipher the voice a little, now that it wasn't so gung-ho. Male. Sounded like a human. ARE YOU THE BLUE THING?

I looked at Ax.

[That is what we look like. I am the...black and orange one. It is a morph.]

OH. OKAY. HOLD ON. The voice switched tones. YEERKS! THIS IS YOUR FINAL WARNING. WE ARE PREPARED TO ATTACK ON COMMAND!

[What the--] Marco began.

I almost jumped when a familiar voice hit my ears. Or whatever thought-speech hits. Visser Three stepped into view from one of the buildings, and a circle of his warriors spread apart from him. [Who is it that dares challenge the Yeerk Empire?] He roared, his eyes falling on us.

[Ax, you talk to him.] I said. We needed Andalite-sounding people here.

[It is not us, Visser,] Ax remarked with somewhat of a sneer. [Perhaps you have picked up another enemy on your quest of death.]

I remembered the freed Hork-Bajir around us. There were only about ten left; the others lay dead, scattered from where we stood to the cages.

[Whoever you are, listen,] I started. [We're leaving now. I want to be sure we come in contact with you again.] There was no answer. [Guys,] I said to the others, [we're hauling butt.]

[Head count?] Cassie asked.

[Ten Hork-Bajir and...four eight ten thirteen...fifteen Humans.] Rachel Reported. [you're right Jake, my leg's killing me.] I saw the giant gash in her back leg.

[Let's go!]

I started the charge. We dashed for the nearest steps, hoping that we would come out somewhere open.

I looked over my shoulder. Humans and Hork-Bajir controllers began on our tails. LEAVE THEM ALONE! THE VOICE ROARED, THIS IS OUR BATTLE, YEERKS, NOT THEIRS! We reached the top of the steps with no problem. Pushed open a door disguised as a tree trunk and helped the Humans climb out.

As soon as he was able to, Tobais Flew up into the air and watched down below at the sorry group of Aliens and Humans. [Do you want me to take them, Jake?] He asked.

[Yeah.] I nodded at the dark sky. I watched as Tobais began the mid-air morph into Owl. No way a Hawk could fly in the darkness.

He flew up ahead, leading the escapees into the darkness, towards the hidden valley of Hork-Bajir. I guess only Tobais knows the way. I sighed.

"Now what?" Rachel whispered. She had de-morphed out of her power morph, and the Others were as well.

I began to de-morph as well. [Well,] I waited for my lips to form. "Seeing as it wasn't the worst disaster in our Yeerk Pool experiences, I say we go back in to see what's going on."

V

Jake

[This is insane,] Marco sneered. Like he usually does.

[Don't complain, Marco. You didn't even get scratched last time.] Rachel said fiercely. [We should know what's going on here. See if we have a new ally or new enemy.]

['The enemy of my enemy is my friend',] Cassie quoted optimistically.

[Right. Going in.] I said. We were all morphed as the most inconspicuous things-Hork-Bajir. We had acquired them on our journey to the Hork-Bajir Homeworld. They would be perfect with blending in.

[What are we searching for?] Ax inquired.

[I'm not sure.] I swiveled the cool snake-like head back to look at the Hork-Bajir that was Ax. We lifted the tree-trunk secret door and one by one crawled back inside.

It wasn't hard to seep into the crowd. Obviously, in the few minutes we'd been gone, nothing much has happened.

[What backup?] Laughed the Visser, [I don't see backup. I don't even see you.]

HA! THIS ONLY SHOWS THE INTELLIGENCE OF THE YEERK MIND. WE CAN BE ANYWHERE. ANYONE. HAVE A DEMONSTRATION, YOU EGOTISTICAL SLIME!

Suddenly, in the middle of the crowd of confused Yeerks, a scream silenced the murmurs around the room. It was far away, but I could

see the Human controller reach into his ear and claw until it bled, until the gray Yeerk splatted against the floor and the Host fainted away.

[The Yeerk left its host willingly.] Ax realized, [Something must have happened to it. Someone must have done that.]

[Do you think we're dealing with an Ellimist?] Cassie asked, frightened.

[No,] Ax said definitely, [You have seen how the Ellimist works. He bargains. Goes back on his word of not interfering. This seems to be a race of people.]

[Like what?] Rachel asked.

All the while, we were slowly moving and spreading out across the walking section of the Pool. Looking for anything.

[Your tricks do not scare me,] The Andalite-Controller sneered mercilessly, [One Yeerks death shall not stop the conquer of Earth.]

EVEN IF THAT ONE YEERK IS YOU? YOU HAVE ACTED EVILY. YOU WERE NOT HAPPY WITH WHAT YOU HAD AND NOW YOU MUST CONQUER AND INFEST FOR YOUR OWN SURVIVAL AGAINST YOUR ENEMY. YOU ARE A SHAME TO OUR UNIVERSE, A DISGRACE OF A SPECIES. YOUR STUBBORNNESS WILL BE YOUR DEATH.

[Quick, talk to him!] Rachel said, annoyed.

[We're still here.] I said quickly.

HUH? I SAW YOU LEAVE!

[Are you alone here? Is what you're saying true? What ARE you?] I fired off.

SLOW DOWN. YES, THERE ARE OTHERS. THERE ARE ELEVEN OF US. AND YOU. There was a long, long pause. I was about to speak again but was cut off before I could start. WE ARE READY TO ATTACK. ARE YOU GAME? WHERE ARE YOU, ANYWAY?

I looked at the others. It was hard to tell them from the others but they looked back at me. [We are morphed as Hork-Bajir. When the action starts, you will recognize us.] I said.

HORK-BA-WHA-HUH'S?

[The big ones with the green-brown skin and the blades,] Cassie answered.

OH. BUNCHES OF THOSE.

The Visser was speaking now. I was concentrated too hard on our current status was to listen to his ego blab on and on.

I sensed motion beside me. I didn't want to move too soon; it might be nothing. A look behind my back, at a Hork-Bajir. [Who am I looking at?] I asked my friends.

[Aximilli, Prince Jake.]

I looked forward again. [Ax, the Human beside me.] I tilted my head just so slightly towards the one in question. [What's he doing?]

[The human appears to be slowly drawing a weapon, my Prince,] Ax reported calmly, like it was obvious, [It is about as large as his hand and is silver. It is not a Yeerk model.]

Slowly, I turned my head. The person was, indeed, drawing a weapon. Ever so slowly. Staring straight at Visser three. He had penetrating blue eyes and a muscular build, short cut black hair.

[Ax, do you think...]

It happened before I could finish my pondering. His hand shot out and flash of Green light shot out of the laser.

AAAAANDD ACTION! The voice laughed gleefully.

The guy next to my rolled onto his shoulder and stood up again, firing off the laser. I started slashing at the Controllers around me so I wouldn't be mistaken for one. Ax began to De-morph.

[They're all over the place!] Cassie cried, [I see six right now! Humans! With Lasers!]

Suddenly, my brain was flooded with a million different thoughts. Like being in a lunchroom full with chatting Andalites. Only not Andalites.

Sometimes, when one of us is extremely in pain or scared in a morph, we'll stop concentrating on people to send the thoughts to. Every person within thought-speech range can hear us.

It was like that. All of these people-whatever they were-were not concentrating anymore. And their silent communication leaked.

MACE! MACE! MOVING IN!

BEHIND YOU!

I'M AT SEVENTEEN!

HA! TRY TWENTY-THREE!

DON'T GET COMPETITIVE...

THERE GOES ANOTHER ONE!

PUSH THEM INTO THE POOL, IT'S FUNNY!

GOD, YOU'RE SUCH A JOKESTER! CUT THEIR THOUGHTS AND MOVE ON.

MACE! I SAID MOVING IN!

SORRY!

[AHHHHHHH!] I yelled, [Some of us have to concentrate here!]

SORRY!

SORRY!

SORRY!

SORRY!

SORRY!

SORRY!

SORRY!

SORRY!

SORRY!

SORRY!

It was amazing. Yeerks dying left and right! Like bugs on a windshield! And these eleven people were only...human?

[They are not human.] Ax said, as if reading my thoughts. [I assume that they are morph-capable and have chosen human forms. I am surprised, however, seeing how Humans fall down so easily.]

We were doing pretty well on our own. When I stopped for a moment, Cassie, Ax and I were fighting in a circle; an Andalite and two Hork-Bajir. Rachel was a bear, having slid off and re-morphed somewhere, and Marco was gone, probably following suit.

But our attack wasn't as easy as before. And the Hork-Bajir body wasn't as strong as it had been before. Two blades had broken off. One Horn on my head. Part of my tail. A chunk out of my chest.

Luckily for us, the newcomers were getting all the attention. [Leave the bandits alone! Get them! I want one alive for infestation! Get them you blithering fools!] The Visser Roared, managing not to enter the battle himself.

[Coward,] Sneered Rachel.

[Why aren't the...they...getting hurt?] Cassie wondered aloud, [look at them, no blood!]

[They might be capable of healing small wounds,] Ax suggested, the Vucccea does that.]

[Just concentrate on the fight!] Rachel growled, joining our circle. SLAASH. A human down. RIPPP. A Taxxon down. Gross, but our duty.

[Four of the newbies, coming this way!] Rachel reported, being the tallest of us all. [Good lord they're good!] She dropped back onto four feet and barreled into a Hork-Bajir about to ram into me.

EEEWWW! BLOOD! I heard a girly voice squeal.

[Blood happens,] I shot back, taking a moment to lick a wound on my leg. The girly one had black hair. She turned around, kicked a Hork-Bajir under its chin, then fired a laser through its head point-blank range.

[Watch out, Buffy.] Rachel sneered.

[Or Xena,] Marco added, Lumbering up from the shadows of a nearby building and grabbing two humans in his giant arms. [Anyway, make way both of you, here comes King Kong!] He let loose a terrifying roar.

HEY! GUYS! GROUP MEETING OVER HERE! Shouted the guy's voice, the first one we'd contacted. The five that were already with us helped us spread out in a circle that kept growing outwards. Soon we were joined by six other...Humans. Or, what appeared to be Humans.

"Let's kick Butt!" The Buffy-Xena girl shrieked, taking out another Hork-Bajir.

[THAT'S MY LINE!] Rachel roared.

[Prince Jake,] Ax said worriedly, [I have never seen so many slaughtered controllers before. We should tell these aliens that they are merely hosts.] Ax pointed out.

It was kind of creepy. So many dead...[Wait! Hold your attack!] I yelled to the newcomers.

WHAT?

[We're killing the Humans off. And the Hork-Bajir. We're not just killing the Yeerks, we're killing the Hosts, too. Isn't there a better way to do this? Without killing our friends?]

They were quiet. They lowered their weapons slowly, looking at us. We were a terrible sight-two Hork-Bajir, An Andalite, a gorilla and a Bear-all very bloody and out of breath.

[What's the matter, My dear warriors? Forget something?] The Visser snickered.

One of the alien-people snapped his weapon into a holster at his side, looking around. "Yasshet. Eyyis kyan sep Va Quep Neshell." He murmured, waving his hands instruction-like. The other ten fell into position around us, their weapons ready.

[This is a defense position.] Ax stated.

[We were doing so well!] Rachel fumed, stamping a giant, frying pan sized paw on the ground.

[Perhaps seeing their casualties the Yeerks will retreat.] Ax added helpfully. I nodded.

[Listen,] I said to the newcomers, [Let's get out of here. Let them re-group before we kill off any more Humans.] I was starting to feel

sick.

OKAY. REGROUP ON THE SURFACE, ON MY CALL. The leader-like one ordered silently. READY...GO!!

We turned and ran. I followed up in the back, making sure none of us were left behind.

Movement!!

The controller to the Visser's left, who held a small Dracon beam in his hands, pulled the trigger and a red beam shot down on us. It hit one of our new allies in the back of his chest and pierced a hole through his body.

He staggered, covering the wound with a hand. [He can heal that right?!!] Cassie groaned at the horrible scene.

HE SHOULD BE ABLE TO.

"Hurry!" His girl with the black hair hissed. He stumbled forward, slowly gaining strength.

A flash! The Visser Moved!

The Andalite-controller jumped forward in a blur of movement. His tail blade moving faster than my eyes could follow.

His blade struck the injured Alien's Back, slicing, probably, through his spine. He whirled around only to be struck again across his chest and again across his neck.

"NOOOO!" Shouted the girl.

But I had seen this before. And I didn't need to talk to Ax to know that this one was lost--one way or another--as several Controllers dragged the limp body to the nearest side of the Yeerk pool.

VI

Kaisc-Four-Seven-Nine

A splash! Right above me! I squirmed away. Not every swim was a great one. Always there is some stupid host sloshing about in the shallows.

No, no, not sloshing. A head. A human face underwater. This wasn't anywhere near the dock. I still had several more hours of relaxation before getting back into my child.

But I felt the tense situation. And I found my way to the ear. And inside of it. Something was different about this one. Yes, different indeed. I stretched into the inner ear, past an unbroken film that stood in my way--a new host--and the brain.

Yes! By the way it moved under my body I could feel that it was not totally human. Oh, it WAS human all right, but it was more than that, too.

As I sank into the many crevices and folds in the mind I smiled

inwardly. I took over the eyes, and blocked out the rest in case the new body tried to escape my power.

But I soon found that it would be doing none of that.

[Respond!] I felt throughout our mind. I moved the lips. I thought the words. They did not come.

I focused the eyes. Visser three, of course. I nodded, incapable of doing anything else.

This body was near death! And I was put into it!

But, ah. The mind was overflowing with boundless mines of information. No, it was not human. It took a human shape. Naturally morph-capable.

And this power...

I used as much as the wilting strength that I dared to use this strange thing that seemed to complete me. I felt myself vibrate with the energy that was mine. The pain eased.

Most of it. It was still there.

So...much...information...

Hondolian! He was born Dragon!

Warrior! Killed many! Dangerous!

Instantaneously I was open to so much. I almost did not heed the Visser's demand.

[Learn all you can. If the host begins to die, leave it immediately.] He ordered. I just nodded my head, so busy with the mind...

I raised a hand weakly. Blood stained his shirt, but the wound could no longer be mortal. There was still the pain...this strange energy had done all it was capable of doing in its current state.

I focused on the hand. It glowed green for a moment. But then the power was lost.

I gazed past the hand, letting it fall onto his stomach powerlessly. Five of the six Andalite bandits and...and...

His people. I laughed, rolling through the names, --Marcus, Jacelyn, Mason... grinned at myself for no reason. All fighters.

[Move forward and I will slay your warrior.] The Visser growled. I smiled--I would have warned him. Should have. But I did not have the strength.

COME ON, GUYS, LET'S GET OUT OF HERE. Said their leader. Marcus. Silent to the Visser, open to me. I suppose they forgot I was no longer one of them. Then silence. The Andalites must have warned the fool about our kind. They were smart, the Andalites. But too egotistical for their own good.



"You're right," One finally said aloud, So that even Visser three could hear, "But even if our own is infested here we will not leave without him."

It happened quickly. The Visser staggered backwards, attacked by an invisible pain, and the one other Andalite in his true form galloped up, swiped at him, then looked down unto me.

[You will die in the most vile way, Yeerk, for what has happened here,] He said to me in silent, private thought-speech. And the last thing I recall is the soft, thudding sound of the flat part of his deadly blade slap against my head.

VII

Jake

YOU. GORILLA MAN. GRAB HIM. EVERYONE ELSE, MOVE OUT. The girl growled, As Ax and Marco rushed back our way. With our allies following up behind us, we ran for the morning light above us.

"We need to get home," Hissed the girl, looking around, "I'm already prepared to transport."

"Wait," Their leader stopped her concentration patiently, "Sassett vbei nahckt ess esst achvi,"

He continued on like so. Although I had no idea what they were saying, I heard the word 'Yeerk' Once.

"Lay him down, now," Said one of the Aliens to Marco, who laid the unconscious host on the ground. Soon after, Rachel disappeared into the woods to de-morph and returned shortly, exactly the same, with no injuries.

They didn't notice as I slipped away, too.

I felt so much relief as I felt the changes begin. I wanted to curl up and go to bed, having no sleep that night. But when the fur slid away and my eyesight dimmed, I was human, and ready to morph again.

One by one, we disappeared, only to re-appear with no injuries. And yet they didn't notice, arguing over something or other in a foreign language.

Finally, the one who seemed to us to be the leader turned to me. "Please forgive us, but we must ask you to accompany us back to our ship. You have information that we need concerning our Yeerk problem."

I looked at the others. Once again, the weight was on me. But I was used to it. It happened a lot. [We will come with you,] I finally announced, but there are some difficulties.]

"Go on." He nodded.

[There is another one of us, currently leading a freed group of hosts to a hiding place. I think he should be back by noon tomorrow. We will stay with your Fighter until the Yeerk is dead; several days. We

will need to contact with our...] I thought of a suitable word for the Chee, who often covered our butts for us in tough times. [...Planetary Allies for them to take our place in our social life while we are gone. You will have to be able to transport our sixth member to wherever it is we're going and get the message through to cover for us.]

"Understood." I was amazed at the efficiency that followed seconds after. "Flame," He turned to one of the nine remaining fighters, who nodded and turned into the woods, disappearing into the dark forest.

[You know of the Chee?] Ax asked, stunned.

The Alien merely shrugged. "We noticed Several hundred Androids, besides our own, too high of technology to be Yeerk. We looked into it."

[Ah.] It was a suitable answer for Ax.

The girl was leaning over (whom I guessed must be her boyfriend's?) limp form, turning the head slightly to hinder the blood flowing from a slight scratch made from Ax's tail. "The main injury is to the back and throught. He needs Attention immediately."

"Okay." Her leader nodded to us. Five of the other fighters came over to touch each one of us lightly on our head. "Think calmly. It will take four seconds."

\*\*\*\*\*

I assumed that I had fallen asleep, or lost consciousness. But when I thought about it, no time had been lost at all.

But...what had happened in that 'four seconds?'

Around me was a white circular dome, with very dim lights shining from the floor and lower walls. "This is the Infirmary." The Alien looked down at me, slightly dizzy. My best guess was that whatever just happened took a bunch of energy. "Please follow.....me, yes, me, follow me."

We wandered behind the tired leader into a hall beyond the dome. Making sure that nobody was coming, We slipped into a room across the hall. He seemed to have regained his sense by the time we were there.

"I am Commander Asprangn'e, of the Hardra Six, where you are currently located. We are not currently in orbit, as we prefer being able to travel free of gravity pulls, located in sector L of the Galaxy XMB55." He alerted us. "Who might you strange allies be?"

I looked over at Cassie. Then the others. Then I began to De-morph.

The surprise on the Commander's face was brief as he waited for us to finish.

"I'm Jake," I said casually, (Although I did give him my last name, not that I'd put it here) "These are Cassie, Marco, Rachel, and

Aximilli-Esgarouth-Istill." His reaction was a smile. "I am glad to have the pleasure to meet such fine creatures who have been keeping Earth safe for-" He cut himself short. "Safe."

I glanced Briefly at Rachel. She'd caught it, too. I decided to bring it up later.

"Sir," Cassie said meekly, "I mean, Commander, What about the Controller, I mean, your Fighter?"

[Cassie,] Ax, cut in brightly, [Is a wonderful doctor on both Earth creatures and those she is unfamiliar to as well.] I looked at him and then he looked down, as if he knew he shouldn't have said it. He's still worked up about how Cassie saved his life that time--doing a precise operation that she had barely any idea how to do.

"Actually, I was hoping that I could at least watch," Cassie added quietly. Commander Asp...Asprangwhatever Smiled and nodded at her eagerly, and she disappeared back out into the hall.

"She should run into no difficulty," He said, smiling again, "But I would like to ask you some questions about Yeerks."

[Prince Jake,] Ax warned me with private thought-speech, [I have a weary feeling about this. I feel that maybe this species wishes to defeat the Yeerks so that they are free to take Earth for themselves.]

I nodded slightly, pretending to scratch my head. [What should we do?] He asked in his always-calm, always-patient voice.

I nodded again at the Commander, who was asking Marco and Rachel questions. Ax caught it, and I jumped in.

"They live inside another creature's mind, open to any thoughts or memories that the creature has. They have complete control of the body, All the time." Rachel said.

"But," I added, with a look at my cousin, "They feed from a, a source, Called a Kandrona. They must leave their hosts every three days to feed, or they die of Kandrona starvation inside their host's head."

The Commander nodded stiffly. "Than this is the way my fighter's Yeerk will die."

A lady in a plain white outfit, a long white dress with long, wide sleeves, entered and spoke a foreign language for about a minute with him, who then turned to us at her departure.

"Please do not be alarmed as the changes begin, they happen quite quickly when changing to natural state." He alerted formally.

[I suppose he is about to shift into what is their natural form, Prince Jake. I assume that we might be seeing more of them in this form and he wishes us not to be surprised.] I nodded at Ax's observation.

The changes were fast. One second, I was looking at a Young man, with

a tall and strong stature, very formal, then in a flash of bright, yet solid, block blue light there was something else altogether.

What struck me first was that it looked like a dog. But not like the Pemalites, the spirits that live on through dogs; this was something different.

There was no happiness here. The creature had four strong limbs, with two longish ears, almost like a horse, that were laid flat against the back of his neck. A blue mane, like a Mohawk almost, started on top of his head and ended at the center of his back. Right where the bushy, wagging golden retriever tail should have been were three sleek, tasseled tails, each ending in the same blue color as the mane, and each with a small ring around the end, like a band of ranking or something. His head was a little over my waist, making the creature not at all as big as the tiger, more like a cheetah. I could feel the very essence of this animal before me, and it was...Speed.

Stealth.

Wit.

I broke from the trance when he spoke. "I have demonstrated thus to mute all proceeding surprise. On our ship, A creature may stay in any form they choose, but this one is favored by most. My infested fighter had to be converted to his natural state to finish the treatment." His voice was exactly the same as before. It numbed me that such a canine like creature could speak such flawless English.

[Excuse me, Commander Asprangn'e.] Ax cut in, [But might I ask why further treatment is needed if your fighter has been changed to his natural form?] There was not immediate answer. Both sides of the room was confused by the other. Rachel figured it out first, though.

"It's like with the nuclear blast. When we were with the Dinosaurs," She looked at me. "None of you were there. Tobais was hurt in his natural form, but when he morphed and De-morphed, he was still injured."

I was still confused. So was the Commander. And Ax.

"Wait." Marco caught up, "You guys carry wounds from one morph to the next?"

"Only minor ones are forgotten. But...you don't?" The Commander was still puzzled.

"Why do you think we're okay now?" I asked, catching on, "When we morph, it takes the DNA from the creature we're morphing. DNA isn't affected by Dracon beams, much."

The Alien smiled. "How queer. Our Changing process is done in a most totally opposite way."

With no other explanation, He led us across the hall, Into the infirmary.

VIII

Kaisc-Four-Seven-Nine

Slowly, ever so slowly, I began to recollect things. The Andalite. The new host. The tail blade.

But now...where was I?

White, everywhere. Some kind of hospital, perhaps? It could be the Yeerk pool infirmary.

My eyes focused. I looked into the beragged Oshmarron's memory.

No. This was his infirmary. His ship. The Nurse came by. Took the temperature. Her name was Sara. My host had been here many times. Injured in battles.

As I came to my senses, I found that my paws and hindpaws were bound....ah, paws. The memory was sweet and fresh in the mind. His natural form.

[Jerk.] He said. And left me to analyze the people in the room.

Through a door down the side of the room I could see, entered Marcus. Marcus was his Commander. I smiled, as if I was sipping lemonade and flipping through a photo album. Marcus wished for everyone to call him their Commander, but they were all too close of friends to do this.

Entered behind him, an Andalite. Followed by four Children.

What? My mind buzzed over the information at hand. There were children here, on the mothership. Many disguised as Humans for their own pleasure. Kalypto and Carin. Luke. Jacelyn. Rob. So many children, but these were unrecognizable, even to him.

Him.

Had I lips, I would have smiled faintly. The Andalite would tell the officials about our Three-day limit. I would die of starvation. The thought came lightly, I was bound to die sooner or later. Some say that the great hunger of starvation is the most gallant way to die, having to face the most pain that anyone could possibly endure, ever.

Even this fighter, whom was my current host.

And yet...

This one was a child, too! An Oshmarron age of great measures, longer than any other of his peers, or elders, he was thousands of years elder than even the oldest Yeerks I knew!

But so young!

Ah, yes, the story behind the age seeped into my awareness. He was a human age of seventeen. And never would he appear older than

Seventeen, due to an accident. If I could escape with this host, I would have it for as long as my life cycle lasted, he would outlive me, my spawn, and theirs. And theirs.

A child fighter. A brilliant mind, masterminding thousands of computer programs to make even the Yeerk technology look dumb.

They approached. I lifted my head slightly, only to find that it, too, was strapped down to my bed. I was stuck. Stuck to look at my surroundings. And look through this fruitful mind.

The Andalite finished a silent conversation with Commander Marcus and turned to me, tail blade quivering. [You have come here to die, Yeerk. Slowly the wrath of Starvation will overcome you, and you will leave that host you have claimed. Perhaps if you leave it now I could spare you life.]

"'nd'lite," I murmured hoarsely in a whisper, my thought still throbbing from the tail blade slice by Visser three, "Kill me 'neways," I choked back at him, coughing to relieve myself of the dry taste of blood in the back of my throat, "'nd there's so much in here," I smiled, coughing again feverishly, "So much to think about."

One of the Children approached me. "What is your name?" She asked. "Jai, Jessuniac," I murmured.

Her hand reached forward. I writhed against it, but finally felt it clasp firmly around my throat, over the wound. I gasped for breath. "'Tbring death t'me brings death to him," I choked.

"What's your real name?"

So. The Andalite Bandits.

Not Andalite at all.

Wouldn't the Visser have a FIT if he knew! His plans of total domination of Earth, betaken by five Human children and one Andalite youth...

I told you that children have so much potential.

For one whole day, they sat with backs against the wall, watching me. And as I felt the pricks from needles and soothing coolness of medicines, I watched them.

They all sat there, except for the Andalite and one of the girls. While the Andalite stood aside, carefully watching everything with four eyes, the girl stood over me, talked with the doctors and nurses, and sometimes tended to my body herself. There was a red clock above my watchers, and it stood on Universal Standard Time, which puzzled them as they continued to set their watches to the time throughout the night.

I was constantly awake, even if the body was put under sedatives for certain tests. They did do a lot of looking in the ears. Not that they would find anything there-it was quite a mess getting into this brain. And without Kandrona rays, the only way I was coming out was death.

But I stray. When the Universal Standard Time Clock hit 13:17, A new watcher joined the four already there, but this one was not human. It was a bird-and the mind I was in was intelligent enough to know that it was a Red-tailed Hawk.

It was widely known throughout the ranks that one of the Andalite bandits always chose a hawk morph. But I watched the imp for four hours straight, and not once did he move to de-morph. I was puzzled. The Oshmarron mind gave me its possible solutions, but none seemed fit. This young, yet very old, Oshmarron knew less about Andalites than I do.

Later that day, I convinced myself that the injuries were healing. Soon, the host would be fully capable to do whatever it could.

And what would I do then?

The only thing left to do. Excape.

XIV

Jake

Tobais looked down on the fallen Warrior. [Very well-evolved creature. Nocturnal, I guess. He's a Controller?]

"How do you know they're nocturnal?" I wondered.

"Isn't it obvious? Out in the hall, even in here, it's so dark, and cold. They obviously evolved nocturnally, so they keep their mothership in the same manor as their home planet." Cassie pointed out.

[Like the Andalites,] Ax added. It was true; Andalites carried large domes on their ships, to make them feel at home.

"The Homeworld has been destroyed many years ago," Someone cut in, pasting on a white substance to the three wounds on the host. I was unaware that anyone was watching. "Destroyed by Zereks. We achieved space travel shortly before and only a very few excaped the Nova."

Ax stiffened. [Zereks?!]

"Yes, why?"

[We are aware that they are extinct!] He argued.

"Well," Huffed the nurse, "If you're so sure just wait around! They're bound to attack sooner or later." She walked off.

[What's a Zerek?] Tobais wondered.

[They are small, red-brown in color. Very stupid, far less intelligent than Yeerks. This made them not only easy to kill off, but a dangerous enemy. They probably Destroyed the Oshmarron Homeworld for their own pleasure.]

"Like drunk college kids on their graduation night," Marco murmured.

I smiled.

[They had great numbers, giving them strength. When we finally wiped them out, we assumed that there were no more left!] Ax exclaimed.

I yawned. "Hey, guys, Why don't we look around this place? I'm sure Mr. Commander won't mind." I added quietly, "And I think there's something suspicious about these people. I want a closer look on their motive for killing Yeerks."

Everyone nodded, except for Ax. [I will stay here, Prince Jake. I want to watch the Yeerk until its time is up.]

I nodded. The rest of us walked into the hall.

"It's cold," Rachel shivered in her morphing leotard and biking shorts. I nodded agreement. "Let's morph!" Was her solution.

"What?" I smirked. "Dogs, maybe?"

"I wouldn't mind morphing into a sweater and a pair of Jeans," Marco muttered.

"Polar bear," Rachel voted.

"Rachel," I sighed. "Let's just go wolf. They sort of resemble the Oshmarrons-I'm sure nobody will mind."

So we 'went wolf.' And instantly I could smell everything.

WOAH!

[French fries,] Marco noted.

[I smell engine oil.]

[I smell... you don't want to know what I smell.]

Soon we were off, down the hall. The hall merged with another hall, fitted on either side with doors and keypads, which Tobais and Cassie thought were probably dormitory rooms. We followed along behind a crowd of Humans, Oshes, and small dragons, and other, smaller creatures that kept talking and giggling; like puppies who could talk.

The hall we were in, then, opened into a mall. A mall so big it made the Mall of America seem microscopic. Rachel paused for a whole minute before regaining her senses.

[Too bad I left my wallet in my room,] Was all she said.

We followed the source of the French fries, finding a big food court with a thousand different places to eat. I'm possibly over-exaggerating, but there were so many little stands with so many different kinds of Species conversing around them with so many smells it almost made me dizzy.

[And every one of them is an Oshmarron.] Cassie added to the silence.



We were moving again. With no idea where we were, we wandered through the thousands of mazes of this ship until we wound up in what looked like a jail-cell area. About a hundred little rooms, with only a few containing anything. We turned to leave before we caused any commotion, and an overhead message startled us.

"Hello, Hello, Hello! This is TOM, Telepathic Optic Microchips! Would, Jake!, and, Company! Please come to the, Prison Cell Sector! Telesending directions! Thank you!" An over-excited voice giggled. Suddenly a map flashed into my head, showing where we were and where we should be. For some reason, where we were was where we should have been.

About four Oshmarrons and Ax came marching down from the other end, leading between them the only Oshmarron-controller ever created. We hurried up to meet them and the whole group stopped before one cell.

"We have done all we can with alterno-Stone tech, So he is left with his own power to recover fully." Shrugged the Commander, "If It is okay with you, we plan on keeping him here until the Yeerk dies."

[It sounds like a good idea,] I nodded, [But can't he use the power to free himself from the cell?]

The Four Oshes chuckled quietly. Commander Asprangn'e smiled. "Our laws state that our species should never be deprived of their power by one of our own. Our cells are strong enough to prevent an Osh from escaping, even if they are capable of the greatest power possible, like Jai here." He patted our prisoner On the head, who growled and shrank away.

Turning to the Cell, he placed his now-human hand on a small blue pad, and the door opened. "Please," He said, turning to me, "Place your hand there and say "Open only for Visitor: Jake."

I did so, being assured that this would allow the cell to be opened by only the commander and I. All I had to do was place my hand on the pad and say "Visitor: Jake."

We freed the controller from his bonds and locked him in. I was warned to step away from the cell as the shock-field was activated.

[Ax, I think, just for the record, that he's secure in there.] I said, [Come on, there's a lot of food down in the mall.] Reluctantly, Ax agreed and joined us in Wolf Morph to the Food court to raid the Cinnabon (Yes! They had one!) he claimed that it tastes just as good as a wolf as it did as a human, but to make sure he de-morphed and took on human form to test his theory.

[No, I believe that the Cinnabuns are better in this form,] He decided in thought-speech, as his mouth was stuffed full.

And the people around watched, and laughed.

Kaisc-Four-Seven-Nine

I paced slowly around the small square room, Again. I was running out of time. I had to act, fast, now.

The cell across from mine was occupied by a big, white, sleeping Oshmarron. My only chance of getting out of here was to get to him.

The door to this cell was electric, I knew, but it kept me in using bars, instead of ramonite or a solid wall. In my Yeerk form I could slip through the gap.

But how would I escape my host without him alerting anyone?

I knew.

The bars were electrified, but their shock could not possibly kill what it contained. That would be like leaving a knife in an insaniatorium. I Lowered my head to the floor, for easy access, then pressed the rest of my body against the bars.

KKKKSSSS! KZAP!

I struggled to be freed of the unconscious host, suddenly so blind and alone. I followed the path I had memorized when I had eyes. Straight. Across.

I felt the body heat of the other Osh, even its heavy breathing. I prayed that it did not awaken and realize what I was doing.

I slipped around to the ear entrance, and struggled my way through. It was difficult to enter this Canine-resembling beast, but its proportions were large enough for me to squeeze by.

The brain.

So different than the human brain I had last entered. But so much the same as the one I had left.

The two Oshes were about the same age. But I left behind any depth of detail as I felt somebody hurrying down the hall.

"Zivewhmmmt," I heard, "Oh dang,"

The Oshmarron darted back down the hall at the sight. I doubted that she knew what had taken place.

I tried the cell door. No electricity. But, to my surprise, the door swung open as I touched it.

I read the mind slightly. He was no convict. Simply a paranoid loner who came and went as he pleased, hiding from his pursuers. Not the enemy of this society. I smiled with his mouth and made my way down the hall.

I was stopped by a guard, who smiled and nodded as I passed.

I smiled back.

This was easier than I thought it would be.

Using the Oshmarron's mind, I found the Battle bridge easily. Keeping away from the officials that were hurrying by, I slipped onto the lower deck and down into the shiphold.

To my left, a wall straight up, with various look-out stations and doors to other areas. Above me, a gray-black ceiling. And to my right...

Space.

The air must have been kept inside by some kind of force field, but ships rolled in from the dark space and came to a stop in their spaces. I found the ship that belonged to my new host.

This was going well.

Taking the information from his mind, I knew that his ship: a mixed variety of many planets' technology, could get me to the Pool Ship in time for me to feed. I could receive my orders, and possibly launch my own secret consumption of this species.

I saw my new title: Visser Four! Or even Visser Two!

XVI

Jake

We were at the Cinnabon when a young Oshmarron ran up and told us of the news.

The controller had injured itself, and they were unaware of what to do.

We ran, still in wolf morph, to the cell area. Ax promised to catch up as soon as he was in his natural form.

The commander and several others were there. The cell was still locked, and the host was leaned against the bars, deftly unconscious.

"What should we do?" I was asked by someone.

After quickly de-morphing, I pressed my hand against the keypad. "Visitor: Jake." I said loudly and clearly. The door slid open and the body slumped to the floor.

"Check for any major injuries," I said, "But be careful. It might be some sort of trick." Sara, the head doctor, and some of her nurses began checking the body for permanent damage.

"What happened here?" I asked Cassie, shaking my head.

"Maybe the Yeerk thought it could die quickly and easily by electrocution." She offered.

"No," Sara shook her head, standing, "The electricity is monitored so that it is not possible for the prisoner to kill himself. And if you say that the Yeerk is open to all that its host knows, it would know

this."

Ax came galloping up at a very fast pace. [What has happened?]

We explained the situation to him quickly. He stiffened and said, [NOBODY MOVE!] We froze.

[The host is unconscious?]

"Yes."

[And the Yeerk knew what it was doing?]

"We believe so."

[Who was on guard duty?]

A meek female Osh raised a paw. "I was,"

[Did anyone pass by here?]

"Umm,"

[Did anyone leave any of the cells?] Ax continued his rapid question asking.

"Yes, actually." She shrugged. "I think Nat was in here somewhere. He left, uh, about ten minutes ago. Cleo had already found Ja-I mean, the Ye-I mean, HIS body." She pointed at the host.

[Quickly, Prince Jake. We have to act fast.] Ax said.

"Did I miss something?" Marco wondered.

[The Yeerk has switched host bodies. We have to stop it before our identities are in the open.]

"Who's 'Nat?'" I demanded of the commander.

"Long story," He growled, switching forms and taking off down the hall, "I'll tell you on the way!"

We ran after him, not even bothering to morph yet. "TOM!" He shouted, far ahead of us now, "Locate Nat!"

"Nat, Nat, got 'em, Sir!" The giggly computer system shouted.

"Send all available officers and lieutenants to wherever he is. Don't let him leave the ship!"

"Sir, Yes sir!"

"You go on ahead," I said to Ax, Tobais and Commander Asprangn'e, "We need to morph!"

"What?" Rachel asked, "What morph?!"

"Uhh," I thought rapidly. "Battle Morphs!"

We all began the change. Cassie, delicately falling to four feet and

growing a long, busy gray tail behind her. Rachel, growing bigger and stronger, bigger and stronger; Marco, with black fur lengthening all over his body and a flat, rubbery face; And me, with beautiful black and orange striped fur and a long, sinewy body.

We took off!

[Where'd he go?] Rachel growled, looking both ways down the hall.

[Uhh, TOM!] I called.

[Yo.] TOM responded.

[Uhh, where'd the Commander Go?]

[After Nat.]

[Who is...where?] Rachel growled.

[Sending directions.] TOM sighed. [You guys should take a break.]

[Who PROGRAMS that thing?] Cassie sneered.

We found the shiphold easily enough, with the implanted instructions. About thirty Oshes were gathered around a large, white ship at the end of the lineup.

[What's--] I began to the Commander.

NO TIME! GET UP HERE! IT'S THE WHITE SHIP!

We hurried through the crowd to see Commander Asprangn'e on top of the ship in question, which was slowly turning to take off into the stars.

[We've got to stop that ship!] Cassie shouted, rushing for a control panel nearby.

[TOM! Shut down that Ship!]

"Sorry, it's been over-programmed. Only the driver can stop the ship's takeoff!"

[Then close off the Force field! Don't let the ship pass it!]

"Close off the Force Field?!" Laughed TOM.

[Commander, get off of the ship!] Ax shouted from below, [It is about to accelerate into space!]

The Commander began his leap right as the ship's nose budged out of the field. He was jerked off-course and fell onto his front.

[What happened?] I said to Ax.

[The driver has stopped the acceleration! He is slowly moving backwards, back

into place!]

[Is that good or bad?] Marco asked. The Commander slid off the hull of the ship and collapsed onto willing arms below him.

I leapt!

Up! Onto a low beam, Up! Onto the hull, replacing the winded commander. The exit to the ship was a shaded hatch over the pilot seat. I growled down at what must be the Yeerk.

[You will not make it out alive, Scum.] I snarled.

BUT I CAN TRY.

I was surprised to hear telepathy from the Yeerk, but it was sensible. I waited.

[What'd he come back for?] Rachel asked. [He was home free for a second!]

IT'S THE OCCD, Asprangn'e coughed, standing, FOUR SHIPS, MAYBE MORE, HEADING OUR WAY. THEY'RE NOT OUR ENEMIES, BUT THEY ARE NAT'S. THEY WON'T KNOW THAT HE'S A YEERK.

[OCCD?] Cassie asked.

OSHMARRIDDIAN CRIME CONTROL AND DEFENSES. An Osh responded. THEY'RE OK, BUT THEY THINK THEY'RE ALL THAT. NAT'S NOT A CRIMINAL BUT THEY WANT HIM IN CUSTODY LIKE CRAZY.

[So, Yeerk,] I said, more to myself than to it, [It's 'get caught because you're a Yeerk,' or 'get caught by old host-enemies.' Which would you prefer?]

XVII

Kaisc-Four-Seven-Nine

My ship was fast. But was it fast enough to escape the OCCD?

I chuckled, looking back on Nat's past. Poor thing. He was a rare Osh, previously an Akeran child. He thinks that if anyone finds out what he is, it will be his end. And now, this OCCD was after him because they suspect something was up.

Nat-Natan-did not know that if he told his friends at the mothership, they would not kill him. I might be a Stranded Yeerk, far away from even the smallest portable Kandrona, almost starved, but I am still the most Observant one from my Birth-pool. I did not get to be a Sub-Visser for killing and acting. I am a thinker: that is why I do not require a strong host.

But I might keep this one.

I made my decision and acted before the Four ships could get any closer. I accelerated, watched in the rear camera views as the Human morpher leapt from my ship, and shot into space.

I knew, using both the minds of Jai Jessuniac, and Natan, that the remaining fighters would be loading into their ships. Possibly the Humans, as well, if they knew how to drive a ship, (Which I doubt.)

Now, my problem was that I had four...no, six OCCD fighters on my tail. I went full speed and lost them in the visual view, but not on radar. They were still surprisingly close.

I dialed in the emergency call number to the nearest Pool ship, Deathtreader. I wanted backup as soon as I arrived.

"Who is this?" Demanded the Captain.

"I am Kaisc-Four-Seven-Nine, Sub-Visser Twenty of the Hilkmssc Pool." I stated plainly, "I am in desperate need of Kandrona Rays and am nearing your ship."

The Captain looked down, at another screen, then smiled a little. "We have been Waiting for you to show up, Sub-Visser," He acknowledged, "We will secure a private pool for you on your arrival."

I nodded. Then went off-line. I could tell my story later.

Besides, I knew who the 'Andalite Bandits' were!

Behind me, the screens were blank. I looked at the radar. It too was blank. There were no more Red dots, anywhere near the green dot-which was me.

Then, suddenly from all angles, blue dots!

Blue? What was that supposed to mean?

Oh, yes, I had forgotten. The Oshmarrons were the friends of my host. They would normally not be considered a threat.

A screen popped up on my view panel. "Yeerk, we will stop you from going any further towards your ship." Marcus, the Commander, stated firmly, "You will return with us, or die."

"Rot in Hell," I growled, taking a steep nosedive and putting everything I had into speed. I was about half an hour's flight to the pool ship, and it wouldn't be that long if I kept burning up fuel like I was.

The ten ships began expertly buzzing around me, hindering me and bringing me to a below-average speed. I used all of the Oshmarron's learned evading skills, but they simply couldn't match the speed or skill of the Agile, smaller ships.

I shivered.

Up, down, side, side...I rammed one ship in its side, not damaging it enough to explode, but enough to put that fighter out of the game. Nine more. Gaspd.

My radar showed, on the brink of the screen, the pool ship. I carefully manipulated the controls, awaiting the assault pods that covered the area around the Pool ship. None came. I'd have to get

back to the pool ship myself...but could I?

I began to set the ship on Auto-pilot, receiving a steady thrashing of lasers from my attackers. If I could trust another Yeerk at the moment, I would have told them the secret that I now knew. I would have told them about the Four Morph-capable humans.

But the Yeerk I told it to would not give me credit. It would run off and tell the Visser, stating that it was his own information. And I would probably die anyway.

But no. I had to deliver the information myself. I had to...to...Sur...vive...

I shivered madly. In the seat, curled up nose to tail and shivered. I covered my head with a paw. Ever so often The ship would rattle and shake as I was hit. And slowly, slowly, everything began to fade.

Shivered.

I was dying.

XVIII

Jake

We were in the Back Seat of one of the fighters, in chase of the Yeerk. We had pulled out that it was heading towards a pool ship, and finally had set the ship on Auto-pilot at a fast speed.

"Get him on the view-screen," I said to ZoÃ«, the girlfriend to the first Host, Jai something, and our current pilot. Marco, Tobais and I were with her, and Cassie, Rachel and Ax were with the Commander.

A screen popped up in front of us, as if it was a holographic projection. ZoÃ« leaned back to watch, too. It must have been three-dimensional.

There was a large, white Osh, curled up and shaking feverishly in the pilot seat of the ship we were chasing. ZoÃ« snapped off the hologram and opened the radio comm for me.

"The Yeerk is dying," I reported to the rest of the fighters, "We need to hold it off so it can die before it gets to its pool ship."

I felt for the poor controller in that ship. I had been in his place once-it was painful, but then, it also sort of felt like you feel right before the first drop on a roller coaster: 'it's dying, it's dying,' you say to yourself, and laugh at its misery.

But now, we had to make sure it was dead by the time it reached its destiny. "Uh, bad news, guys," ZoÃ« shook her head back at us, "Nat's ship just docked with the Pool ship. We have UBB's all over us." As to back up her statement, she jammed left and we were thrown off our feet.

"UBB's?" Marco wondered.



"Unidentified Beetle Bogies." Snickered the driver.

"Bug fighters," I translated. "Hey, hold on, I have an idea,"

"Before we get any further-" Marco jumped in, "This is insane."

"Right. Listen. And get Rachel, Cassie and Ax on the line. This will be interesting..."

I don't know what it must have looked like, or felt like, but with a shimmer, our Hardra Fighter looked just like one of the Bug fighters. Looking out the window, I saw the Commander's Ship, or, what the computer said was the commander's ship: a bug fighter just behind us.

Us Animorphs were ready for battle, Morphed as Hork-Bajir, once more, for disguise. As the two ships lowered into the Bug fighter launch, A Taxxon's voice issued orders over the radio.

ZoÃ« smiled and motioned for us to be silent. She answered in Taxxonian, or whatever, that we were in for damage reparations from the Oshmarron attack. We were issued inside.

ZoÃ« sort of flashed Purple, and, like the Commander had changed forms so suddenly, she too was something different-a Hork-Bajir. "This okay?"

"Fine." I answered in a gruff voice.

Our 'Bug Fighter' landed between two others, and the other 'Bug fighter' landed several places down. Up ahead, I saw the giant ship that belonged to 'Nat', the controller, and we opened the hatch and got off as quickly as possible.

We joined up with the others halfway towards the ship, and noticed several Hork-Bajir carrying the limp white form out of the hatch in a very fast rate. They entered the nearest door and closed it behind them.

[What's in there?] I asked.

[I don't know,] Ax said, [My guess is that it is a private Yeerk Pool.]

[Good.] We arrived at the door. [If the Yeerk is in the pool, we'll grab Nat, and--]

I cut Rachel off. [Rach, if we grab Nat, the Yeerk will just get a different Host. I have a better Idea. We go in and act as Controllers, but don't let Nat know who we are, if he's even awake. We go in, get the other Controllers out somehow, then we're in control of the situation.]

GOOD IDEA, Commander Asprangn'e nodded, I CAN GET THE CONTROLLERS OUT.

I opened the door.

Almost as soon as I had it open, a loud voice rang over the speakers. "Warning! Fatal gas leaks in sector M23B! Repeat, fatal! Evacuate immediately!"

"What the..." Humans and Hork-Bajir heard the repeated call, sat about, dazed.

"Garfiiss! Fools, get out of here, it's contaminated!" Ax demanded in his best in-command-Visser-or-whatever tone. I don't know if he was convincing or not, but the Controllers Hauled. Privately we congratulated the Commander on his computerized announcement-(He just claimed that it was an 'Old Pastime')

"What about me?" Whined Nat; curled in a corner of a cage at the far end of the room.

"We must retrieve him," I motioned towards the Yeerk pool. Now, it was just a game of tricking Nat.

[How?] ZoÃ« hissed.

[I don't know!] I fumed, [Ax, see if you can set the temp to boiling. No Yeerks will survive, not this time.]

XIX

Kaisc-Four-Seven-Nine

There I was, basically floating, in the big, empty pool.

The Kandrona setting was high, so I soaked in as much as I could in my time there. Slowly-so slowly-I was gaining strength.

I flipped my body in such a way as I went, whirling, around and around the base of the pool. So energizing! So refreshing! I twirled and flipped in the thick molten liquid, relishing my new strength.

But, then...

Hot! It was too hot! I turned and swam like mad. Hot, hot all over! Boiling! There was a commotion overhead, in the room above me. I did not know, nor care, what was going on.

[Computer! What is happening?] I thought. Computer neurons answered my question systematically.

No known answer, thought the computer back to me, can I help you?

[Lower Temperature!]

Cannot override, the computer said to me.

Hot! Hot! Heat!

AAHHHHHHHHHHHHH! I screamed inwardly, writhing as if I were dying of starvation, like I was minutes ago.

Then, A splash! A giant wave pushed me to the back of the pool! I

swam towards the object. A head! Yes! It had to be my host!

I squirmed inside, took root over the brain, my nerves tingling and stinging. I opened the eyes.

Freedom was mine! I was surrounded by others.

"Make one, slight move in the wrong way, Yeerk, and you will die."

Freedom was lost. These were not my people. These were the Oshmarrons. The Humans, possibly.

[If you even start to speak,] Threatened one of the other 'Hork-Bajir', who held a dracon beam at my, Nat's, face. [You will die. And you're too much of a threat to spare you because of your host. Come on.]

Between the Eight of them, I was roughly escorted out into the hall.

"Where you going?" Asked a Hork-Bajir.

I didn't dare speak. "Taking to see Visser. Much information to tell." Explained one. Lucky guess, the Visser had Just arrived at the Pool ship.

I had to get away. I had no idea what they were planning on doing to me, but it would end, I knew, in death.

I did not want death.

Which is why, at the first possible chance, I growled, smacked one of the Hork-Bajir in the face with claws ready, freed my tail from another's grasp, and lunged, with everything my body had, towards my, Nat's, ship.

Nat had a lot, turns out.

"Computer! Close outer hatch! Begin liftoff procedure! Start Force fields!" I sat in my pilot's seat and analyzed the situation. I could see the Eight Hork-Bajir split up and get into bug fighters, randomly parked, and take off. I had spent about one minute in The Pool, at least, giving me about Thirty-six minutes left until starvation, maximum. I had to go out, get the Humans and Oshmarrons away from the Pool ship, then loop back for proper feeding.

My craft lifted from its position and hovered for a moment, then I led it around to speed into the dark space. I knew that there were not only Osh fighters, with Humans that are morph Capable on board, but Also some Bug fighters.

I logged on to the Yeerk system, zipping through space at full speed. "This is Sub-Visser Twenty! Cut your chase, you idiots, go after the Oshmarrons!" I cut the communication, concentrating on speed.

Luckily, the craft was built to outrun other ships. I smiled wickedly as I slowed down, and let my adrenaline stop pumping so quickly.

I waited. But my radar spotted no crafts nearby. I slowed down to a drift, rendezvousing with my stomach after the haywire speed quest. I waited, Lying down and resting until I began to feel the first twinges of hunger. I stood, stretched out, and sat down at the controls.

I looked at my radar screen. But before I could analyze anything, there was a loud CLUNK from above that knocked me off my feet and set off the emergency software.

When I came to my senses, I looked up from the floor. I had no idea how long I had been out of it, but I knew something was wrong.

"Computer, status!" I commanded. Nothing.

"Computer!"

There was a hiss as the hatch above me slowly opened. I expected to be sucked out into space by the vacuum, but no.

How stupid of me! While I had been resting, they had crept up on me and attached our ships together. They were loading into mine.

The Oshmarron mind was quaking in fear. I was about to search his memory and see why, but it happened too quickly.

THUNK! A hard object hit me in the jaw.

I looked up through fuzzy eyes.

There stood a well-statured young Oshmarron lady, with brown and black mottled fur, simply smiling. She wore a black vest sort of thing, with four sliver letters across one side, but I could not read them. She shook her head and smiled, straightening her perfectly postured back as six more Oshes filed in and stood at attention.

"How absent-minded of you, Nat." She chuckled, "For a moment there, I could have sworn you were out of your mind, parking yourself out in the middle of nowhere like that!"

And they lunged.

XX

Jake

"Well, they got him," Sighed Asprangn'e, who turned from the controls, "As I figured they would. They're not fools, the OCCD. They know what they're doing, and they were after Nat. My guess is that the Yeerk will die soon, of Hunger, and that Nat will find a way out. He usually does."

I nodded my agreement.

We were all grouped in the Commander's ship, Him having promised us a ride home. We were de-morphed and resting, out of reach of the Bug fighters, while on our way towards Earth.

"I'm still sort of weary," Cassie admitted, "Could it be possible that the Yeerk escapes?"

"And make it back to feed on time? Ha!" The commander sneered. "No. It is probable that the OCCD will find out that he is a Yeerk, dismiss him of all illegal charges due to that, and freeze the Yeerk in one of their laboratories for study. Believe me, Cassie, If the Yeerk is alive, it will never be free."

I saw Earth ahead of us. Oshmarron travel is so different from Andalites', who use Z-space to travel far distances. Oshes were more into the speed factor, I guess.

Within the hour, we were speeding into the Atmosphere. I could almost feel the heat of the hull as we shot Earthward, towards America, then towards our State, then, slowing, towards our town.

I had not realized it, but the cloaking had been on the whole time. The craft settled down, amazingly, in the woods behind Cassie's house, Concealed in the forest well before the cloaking switched off and we exited the ship.

I looked around. Me. Marco. Rachel. Cassie. Ax, and Tobais, on Rachel's Shoulder. Commander Asprangn'e had taken Human form again and stood at the top of the ramp to the ship hatch.

"Um, thanks," I said, looking at my friends, "Our identity would have been toast without you." I shrugged.

"Yeah. Any time you need help kicking, uh, Zeerbie Butt just call us." Marco pitched in.

[Zerek,] Ax corrected, [But I doubt you will have any problem with them.]

"No." Asprangn'e shook his head. "It is us who need to return a favor. Without your help, the Yeerk might have controlled our fighter, or Nat, without our knowing. Our Race would have been in danger. The Yeerks' charge against us will not end for quite some time; I will tell my troops to watch their brains until then." He smiled. "Good luck. And if you are in need, here." He walked down and handed each of us a palm-sized, black computer. "It is both a Hardra System Computer Distributor, TOM system, and Communicator. It is easy to work, as well. Farewell, my friends."

And he walked back into the ship. The hatch closed, the ramp slid up, and it shimmered before disappearing.

We watched the shimmery area of light seep up into the sky, and vanish to our eyes.

"What time is it?" I asked, blinking.

"Uh, I don't know." Rachel yawned, "But I think my watch is still on Universal time."

[According to your clock, the time is Five-forty-seven.]

"I have to get some sleep," Marco shook his head, "I'm too pooped to morph, even." He began walking up towards Cassie's house, as did

Rachel. Ax galloped off through the woods.

I looked at Cassie. "Well," I said, "We made it."

[Yeah,] Added Tobais, [But what about that thing about the Oshmarrons taking over earth?]

"I don't know." I shook my head and sat down on a fallen log, resting, "As long as we don't see any Oshmarron fighters shooting down New York it's okay with me."

"Come on, Jake, Let's go home. And to sleep." Cassie Helped me up. I smiled and Tobais flew away.

"I'll call you on the computer," I said, holding up the black system. She laughed.

Arm-in-arm, supporting each other, we made our way up the hill, towards Cassie's house, and Back to our lives. As soon as I got home, I plopped onto my bed and was almost instantly asleep.

Tom came in and checked on me, waking me up briefly. I replied that I wasn't feeling good, and he left me alone.

It was nice to know that he cared. Or, that the Yeerk in his head bothered. But he brought me some hot tea and a glass of orange juice. It helped, but I was just tired.

Maybe I couldn't trust him. Not now, anyway.

But I could trust my friends.

And I would. As long as my friend's brains were Yeerk-free, I would trust them.

The End

Note: I would always love nicely E-mail Feedback!!  
~hardra6@hotmail.com

End  
file.